

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
HELD JULY 15, 2024

Mayor Barnhart called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Councilor King, Councilor Lovering, Councilor Piper, Councilor Price, Councilor Robinson, Councilor Shepard, and Mayor Barnhart.

Also Present: City Clerk Staaland, Acting City Manager Peters, City Attorney and Deputy City Attorney Breck via telephone and Sergeant Rice.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Councilor Lovering made motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilor King upon moving item #9 - Approval of Professional Services Contract (budget and grant administration) for Susan Nicosia, to new business, with council voting as follows. Ayes: King, Lovering, Piper, Price, Robinson, Shepard, and Barnhart.

CONSENT AGENDA: Councilor Shepard motioned to approve the consent agenda noting all claims appeared to be in order, seconded by Councilor King with council voting as follows. Ayes: Lovering, Piper, Price, Robinson, Shepard, King, and Barnhart.

July, 15 Claims: \$356,706.75 June, 30 Claims: \$105,783.44

Payroll Claims for 07/05/24 and 2nd quarter.

Approval of July 1, 2024, Council Minutes

Approval of LWCF Grant Agreement - Fenholt Park Skatepark and Bathroom Project - and Authorize City Manager to Execute

Approval of HB 355 Hydrant Replacement Contract - Authorize City Manager to sign and execute.

Approval of HB 355 Meadow Lake Flowmeter Contract - Authorize City Manager to Sign and execute.

Approval of HB 355 Scum Pump Replacement Contract - Authorize City Manager to sign and execute.

Approval of HB 355 Wastewater Switchboard Replacement Contract - Authorize City Manager to sign and execute.

PRESENTATION:

Mountain Climber/Public Transportation - Elizabeth Wood

Ms. Wood updated the Council on the Commuter project for the Mountain Climber Public Transportation, as well as a presentation on what they provide in Columbia Falls.

Ms. Wood reviewed a Proposed Expansion of Service, a commuter service between Kalispell, Whitefish and Columbia Falls, which will potentially open up the zone between Columbia Falls and Whitefish. It could also expand the hours of the On Demand service and increase the number to three drivers in the North zone.

Ms. Wood said they do not have enough funds using their entire 1 Mill Levy to cover the local match needed to implement this expansion of service. They would like to ask Columbia Falls to consider \$15,000, she realizes this amount is significantly higher than the \$5,600 that Columbia Falls currently pays. Councilor Robinson asked if the \$15,000 is above what Columbia Falls already pays. Ms. Wood said it includes the City's current

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contribution. Councilor Robinson asked why the Commissioners didn't want you to exercise the 1 mill. Ms. Wood replied she believes the Commissioners goal is to keep their budget conservative and not add to property taxes. Councilor Shepard asked Ms. Wood if they are still getting our seasoned citizens utilizing the bus. Ms. Wood replied absolutely.

There is a set formula on what the state provides and what our local match is said Ms. Wood. Robinson asked if veterans get a discount. Wood said they believe the one dollar per ride is very reasonable. Council Piper asked if the city pays the requested amount will MDT lower there amount. Wood said no, the city's contribution will help us with the local match. After further council discussion, the council said they would consider the proposed rate increase to the City.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

No formal presentation. City staff will continue to gather information for the final upcoming budget.

NEW BUSINESS:

Approval of Professional Services Contract (budget and grant administration) for Susan Nicosia - Authorize City Manager to sign and execute.

City Manager Peters said this is a reasonable contract with former City Manager Susan Nicosia for professional services in preparing the FY 24-25 Budget and Grant Administration. The city has several grants currently in place and it would benefit the city to have her in place to finalize them. Mayor Barnhart asked if the contract ends at the end of the year. City Manager Peters said it is open without a closing date, as it would depend on the term of the grants. Councilor Price asked if this means the new city manager would not be responsible for grants. Peters replied not exactly, the new City Manager will be working on new and upcoming grants.

Councilor Piper motioned to approve the Professional Services Contract (budget and grant administration) for Susan M. Nicosia, CPA, LLC, seconded by Councilor Lovering with Council voting as follows. Ayes: King, Lovering, Piper, Price, Robinson, Shepard, and Barnhart.

Authorize Call for Bids - Skatepark Construction (LWCF Grant)

City Manager Peters said this call for bids is for the Skatepark and bathroom at Fenholt Park.

Councilor Robinson made a motion to authorize the call for bids for the Skatepark and bathroom at Fenholt Park, seconded by Councilor Shepard and the motion carried unanimously.

Authorize Call for Bids for 2024 Wastewater Treatment Plant Grit Classifier Replacement Project (HB 355 Funds)

City Manager Peters said this call for bids is the big project at the WWTP. This will be a much-needed upgrade at the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Councilor King motioned to authorize the call for bids for the 2024 Wastewater Treatment Plant Grit Classifier Replacement Project (HB 355 funds), seconded by Councilor Shepard and the motion carried.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Councilor Lovering asked if the city has heard anything about the soil sample testing that was done on 6th St. E. City Manager Peters said he has not heard back yet and will investigate it. Lovering asked about the street paving project on 6th St. E. Peters said Knife River's plant was down last week, but they will get to it sometime this week. 5th St. W. is also planned for Thursday or Friday paving.

Councilor Lovering commented that the new sidewalks look great and are of huge value to the city.

Councilor Shepard asked if the weed letters have gone out. City Manager Peters said they have been mailed out and residents are calling back with a scheduled plan. For those we have not heard from the Police Department will make contact this week.

Councilor Price asked if the city received an update from FWP on stocking the fish in the pond at Rivers Edge Park. City Manager Peters said he left a message and has not heard back from them just yet and will circle back to get an approximate date for re-stocking the pond.

Price asked about the graffiti on the park benches on the Talbot walking path. City Manager Peters said he will contact staff to get it cleaned up right away.

Councilor Robinson inquired about the old location for the Boys and Girls Club on 4th Ave. W., the weeds and garbage need to be addressed. Peters said they were sent a weed letter and will be required to clean up the rubbish on the property.

Councilor Piper inquired about the left-hand turn signals on 9th St. from MDT. City Manager Peters said MDT has been notified but it comes down to the overall budget, priority and what the build out is for them.

Columbia Falls is on their radar, but it is a lengthy process. Peters said he will be meeting with Parkside on a potential signal light at their new location.

Piper said he noticed more folks parking in the yellow sections on Nucleus Ave., which is becoming a problem. Peters said he would have the Police Department watching for parking compliance.

Piper asked who is responsible for mowing the boulevards near the new sidewalks. The city should have thought about putting river rock there. Peters said it is the responsibility of the residents. Piper asked if city crews will paint the yellow back on the curbs near the new sidewalks. Peters replied yes city crews will get them painted before school starts.

Piper thanked the city staff for getting the volleyball net out at Columbus Park.

Councilor Lovering asked if the project includes planting grass in the boulevards near the new sidewalks. Peters said he believes so but will investigate it.

Mayor Barnhart said he drove up 1st Ave. W. and the new trees look great.

Mayor Barnhart said there has been a lot of action on the CFAC cleanup and asked council if the city would like to change our stance at this time. In the past the majority of the council didn't agree to send an additional letter at that time. Since then, they have had several meetings and are putting out a lot of new information. Mayor Barnhart said he intends to be at their meeting this week and asked if there would be council support in him speaking on behalf of the city. Barnhart said we would like to see the Record of Decision issued so final engineering and actual clean up can commence. Councilor Shepard asked how close they are in getting the Record of Decision. We are never going to suffice the group that is involved said Shepard. Shepard said he would like to see the ROD and go from there. Mayor Barnhart said from the beginning we wanted it cleaned

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up and it has been sitting for several years. Councilor Lovering feels we have said our peace, the property is located in the county, and it is already moving forward. Councilor Price said so your stance is to accept what the EPA has to offer or make them do more. Barnhart said we know what we have, and we take that criteria to take the steps towards the best method to stop this from going nowhere. After council discussion 6 out of 7 Councilors agreed to have Mayor Barnhart speak on behalf of the City at the upcoming meeting. Mayor said on July 17th they are doing another CFAC meeting at the HUB in Columbia Falls.

Mayor Barnhart said the City manager review committee consisting of himself, Councilor Robinson, Councilor King, and Deputy City Attorney Breck have reviewed the applicants and are at the point that they have two candidates we wish to interview. Ben Billingsley and Clint Peters will be selected to be interviewed on July 23, 2024. Councilor Lovering said she will not be able to attend the interviews.

Mayor Barnhart said the Skatepark is going to bid, and it is moving forward.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

HB 355 is moving forward, which is very exciting seeing these projects moving forward, said Peters.

Peters said he met with HDR on the Wastewater Treatment Plant referencing the ARPA Grant upgrade starting mid-August with a finish date by August 2025.

Staff had a startup meeting on the Housing Study Grant for \$30,000 with a city match of \$15,000; Peters said it's great the city has this grant in place.

The city is working on workflow and going through scope on details of the Raise Grant. It is close and we are beginning to see what the bike path will look like.

The paving project has seen a slight delay as the contractor's asphalt plant was down for a short time which pushed back the city paving projects. Peters said 5th St. W. is in terrible shape and city staff will cut sections of the damaged road out and dura patch to assist in the longevity of the road. This will increase the cost by approximately \$7,500. but should be covered under TIF funds said Peters.

The volleyball net is up, the second water fountain has been installed at Columbus Park and the falls are flowing. The Public Works department has been great at getting requested projects completed.

There was a small sink hole near Horine Park, it was discovered there was a storm drain there and city crews were able to dig it up, clean it out and it is functioning as it should.

Last week we had to close the pool down last for lack of staff. The pool will be closed this Saturday and Sunday as Columbia Falls hosts the divisional swim meet and will also be closed on July 27-28 due to staff shortage.

City staff has posted closure dates on the city website.

MISCELLANEOUS REPORT

Sergeant Rice said the Police Department is fortunate to have appropriate staffing which allows them to do additional training. The Police Department monthly activity report is showing more citations as staff are working proactively.

MISCELLANEOUS

Police Activity Report June 2024

Fire Department Activity Reports June 2024

Correspondence

ADJOURN: Councilor Lovering motioned to adjourn at 8:41 p.m., seconded by Councilor Shepard.

Mayor

City Clerk